

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

April 24, 1975

Honorable Howard W. Cannon, Chairman
Committee on Rules and Administration
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

It is my understanding that consideration is being given in the Rules Committee to amending S. Res. 400 to delete those provisions requiring annual authorizations and related legislative authority. While I am strongly in favor of eliminating the annual authorization requirement, the net result of the amended Resolution will be the creation of an additional standing committee to exercise general oversight of our foreign intelligence agencies. While the manner in which the Senate chooses to exercise oversight of intelligence agencies is for the Senate to determine, I feel compelled to express my concern regarding any plan which would broaden access to sensitive operational information.

During my 31 March testimony before the Committee, I stressed that the intelligence community, particularly CIA, has been confronted with a disturbing proliferation of congressional oversight responsibility. The Armed Services and Appropriations Committees have traditionally exercised oversight of CIA. During the 94th Congress, the Senate Foreign Relations and House International Relations Committees (pursuant to Section 662 of the Foreign Assistance Act) and the two select committees have been briefed on sensitive CIA operations. The Senate Budget Committee has recently established an intelligence unit and begun requesting access to sensitive information. In addition, 11 other congressional committees and subcommittees have requested access to sensitive Agency operational information during the past year. With this background, you will understand my reluctance to have still another committee added to the rolls of those with some oversight responsibility.

I share the President's view stated in his 18 February message to Congress that the nation's foreign intelligence effort would be best served by centralizing the responsibility for oversight of our foreign intelligence community. As the President stated, "The more committees and subcommittees dealing with highly sensitive secrets, the greater the risks of disclosure." Such concentrated jurisdiction would give one committee an overall, rather than parochial, view of the intelligence community.



Mr. Chairman, it is not my wish or intent to limit Congress' access to substantive intelligence on foreign developments. I want Congress to be a consumer of intelligence. However, I believe the trend toward wide proliferation of information on Agency operations must be reversed, rather than fueled, if Congress and the Executive branch are to work together constructively in the intelligence field, and if sensitive operational information is to be reasonably protected from unauthorized disclosure.

Sincerely,

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George Bush
Director